

Marketing and Sales Occupations

Cashiers

(O*NET 49023A)

Significant Points

- Good employment opportunities are expected due to the large number of workers who leave this occupation each year.
- The occupation offers plentiful opportunities for part-time work.

Nature of the Work

Supermarkets, department stores, gasoline service stations, movie theaters, restaurants, and many other businesses employ cashiers to register the sale of their merchandise. Most cashiers total bills, receive money, make change, fill out charge forms, and give receipts. Bank tellers, who perform similar duties but work in financial institutions, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.

Although specific job duties vary by employer, cashiers are usually assigned to a register at the beginning of their shifts and given drawers containing “banks” of money. They must count their banks to ensure they contain the correct amount of money and adequate supplies of change. At the end of their shifts, they once again count the drawers’ contents and compare the totals with sales data. An occasional shortage of small amounts may be overlooked, but in many establishments, repeated shortages are grounds for dismissal.

In addition to counting the contents of their drawers at the end of their shifts, cashiers usually separate and total charge forms, return slips, coupons, and any other noncash items. Cashiers also handle returns and exchanges. They must ensure that merchandise is in good condition and determine where and when it was purchased and what type of payment was used.

After entering charges for all items and subtracting the value of any coupons or special discounts, cashiers total the bill and take payment. Acceptable forms of payment include cash, personal check, charge, and debit cards. Cashiers must know the store’s policies and procedures for each type of payment the store accepts. For checks and charges, they may request additional identification from the customer or call in for an authorization. They must verify the age of customers purchasing alcohol or tobacco. When the sale is complete, cashiers issue a receipt to the customer and return the appropriate change. They may also wrap or bag the purchase.

Cashiers traditionally have totaled customers’ purchases using cash registers—manually entering the price of each product bought. However, most establishments are now using more sophisticated equipment, such as scanners and computers. In a store with scanners, a cashier passes a product’s Universal Product Code over the scanning device, which transmits the code number to a computer. The computer identifies the item and its price. In other establishments, cashiers manually enter codes into computers, and descriptions of the items and their prices appear on the screen.

Depending on the type of establishment, cashiers may have other duties as well. In many supermarkets, for example, cashiers weigh produce and bulk food as well as return unwanted items to the shelves. In convenience stores, cashiers may be required to know how to use a variety of machines, other than cash registers, and how to furnish money orders. Operating ticket-dispensing machines and answering customers’ questions are common duties for cashiers who work at movie theaters and ticket agencies. Counter and rental clerks, who perform many similar duties, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.

Working Conditions

About one half of all cashiers work part time. Hours of work often vary depending on the needs of the employer. Generally, cashiers are expected to work weekends, evenings, and holidays to accommodate customers’ needs. However, many employers offer flexible schedules. For example, full-time workers who work on weekends may receive time off during the week. Because the holiday season is the busiest time for most retailers, many employers restrict the use of vacation time from Thanksgiving through the beginning of January.

Most cashiers work indoors, usually standing in booths or behind counters. In addition, they are often unable to leave their workstations without supervisory approval because they are responsible for large sums of money. The work of cashiers can be very repetitious but improvements in workstation design are being made to combat problems caused by repetitive motion. In addition, the work can sometimes be dangerous. In 1998, cashiers were victims of 6.5 percent of all workplace homicides, although they made up less than 2.5 percent of the total workforce.

Employment

Cashiers held about 3.2 million jobs in 1998. Although employed in almost every industry, nearly one third of all jobs were in supermarkets and other food stores. Restaurants, department stores, gasoline service stations, drug stores, and other retail establishments also employed large



Cashiers try to provide customers friendly and efficient service.

numbers of these workers. Outside of retail establishments, many cashiers worked in hotels, schools, and motion picture theaters. Because cashiers are needed in businesses and organizations of all types and sizes, job opportunities are found throughout the country.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Cashier jobs tend to be entry-level positions requiring little or no previous work experience. Although there are no specific educational requirements, employers filling full-time jobs often prefer applicants with high school diplomas.

Nearly all cashiers are trained on the job. In small businesses, an experienced worker often trains beginners. The first day is usually spent observing the operation and becoming familiar with the store's equipment, policies, and procedures. After this, trainees are assigned to a register—frequently under the supervision of a more experienced worker. In larger businesses, before being placed at cash registers, trainees spend several days in classes. Topics typically covered include a description of the industry and the company, store policies and procedures, equipment operation, and security.

Training for experienced workers is not common, except when new equipment is introduced or when procedures change. In these cases, the employer or a representative of the equipment manufacturer trains workers on the job.

Persons who want to become cashiers should be able to do repetitious work accurately. They also need basic mathematics skills and good manual dexterity. Because cashiers deal constantly with the public, they should be neat in appearance and able to deal tactfully and pleasantly with customers. In addition, some businesses prefer to hire persons who can operate specialized equipment or who have business experience, such as typing, selling, or handling money.

Advancement opportunities for cashiers vary. For those working part time, promotion may be to a full-time position. Others advance to head cashier or cash office clerk. In addition, this job offers a good opportunity to learn about an employer's business and can serve as a steppingstone to a more responsible position.

Job Outlook

As in the past, opportunities for cashiers are expected to continue to be good, due to rapid employment growth and the need to replace the large number of workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Cashier employment is expected to increase as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2008 due to expanding demand for goods and services by a growing population. Traditionally, workers under the age of 25 have filled many of the openings in this occupation—in 1998, about half of all cashiers were 24 years of age or younger. Some establishments have begun hiring elderly and disabled persons as well to fill some of their job openings. Opportunities for part-time work are expected to continue to be excellent.

Earnings

The starting wage for many cashiers is the Federal minimum wage, which was \$5.15 an hour in 1999. In some States, State law sets the minimum wage higher and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages tend to be higher in areas where there is intense competition for workers.

Median hourly earnings of cashiers in 1998 were \$6.58. The middle 50 percent earned between \$5.95 and \$8.22 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.66 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$9.82 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of cashiers in 1997 were as follows:

Department stores	\$6.70
Grocery stores	6.30
Gasoline service stations	6.10
Drug stores and proprietary store	5.80
Eating and drinking places	5.70

Benefits for full-time cashiers tend to be better than for those working part time. Cashiers often receive health and life insurance and paid vacations. In addition, those working in retail establishments often receive discounts on purchases, and cashiers in restaurants may receive free or low-cost meals. Some employers also offer employee stock option plans and education reimbursement plans.

Related Occupations

Cashiers accept payment for the purchase of goods and services. Other workers with similar duties include food and beverage service workers, bank tellers, counter and rental clerks, postal clerks and mail carriers, and retail salespersons, all of whom are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.

Sources of Additional Information

- General information on retailing is available from:
- ☛ National Retail Federation, 325 7th St. NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004. Internet: <http://www.nrf.com>
 - ☛ For information about employment opportunities as a cashier, contact:
 - ☛ National Association of Convenience Stores, 1605 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2792.
 - ☛ United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Education Office, 1775 K St. NW., Washington, DC 20006-1502.
 - ☛ Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union, 30 East 29th St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10016.

Counter and Rental Clerks

(O*NET 49017)

Significant Points

- Jobs are primarily entry level and require little or no experience and little formal education.
- Part-time employment opportunities are expected to be plentiful.

Nature of the Work

Whether renting video tapes or air compressors, dropping off clothes to be dry-cleaned or appliances to be serviced, we rely on counter and rental clerks to handle these transactions efficiently. Although specific duties vary by establishment, counter and rental clerks answer questions involving product availability, cost, and rental provisions. Counter and rental clerks also take orders, calculate fees, receive payments, and accept returns. (Cashiers and retail salespersons, occupations with similar duties, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Regardless of where they work, counter and rental clerks must be knowledgeable about the company's services, policies, and procedures. Depending on the type of establishment, counter and rental clerks use their special knowledge to give advice on a wide variety of products and services, which may range from hydraulic tools to shoe repair. For example, in the car rental industry, they inform customers about the features of different types of automobiles as well as daily and weekly rental costs. They also insure that customers meet age and other requirements for rental cars, and indicate when and in what condition cars must be returned. Those in the equipment rental industry have similar duties, but must also know how to operate and care for the machinery rented. In dry-cleaning establishments, counter clerks inform customers when items will be ready. In video rental stores, they advise customers about the length of rental, scan returned movies, restock the shelves, handle money, and log daily reports.

When taking orders, counter and rental clerks use various types of equipment. In some establishments, they write out tickets and order forms, although most use computers or bar code scanners. Most of these computer systems are user friendly, require very little